



Universally Accessible Treehouse  
Mt. Airy Forest, Cincinnati, Ohio



**For Immediate Release**  
**September 11, 2006**

**Contact:** Rosemary Weathers  
859-331-0794 or 859-801-6014  
[rweathers@rosecommunicate.com](mailto:rweathers@rosecommunicate.com)

## **Volunteer Spirit Builds Universally Accessible Treehouse in Mt. Airy Forest** ***Treehouse kickoff set for 11 a.m. Sept. 12; Kids invited to name the Treehouse***

CINCINNATI, OH – Every American child's dream is rising from the forest floor just 10 minutes from downtown Cincinnati. The Tri-State's first universally accessible treehouse is being built in Mt. Airy Forest thanks to 4,000 volunteer manhours, \$500,000 in donations and a wealth of community spirit.

**Treehouse Kickoff:** Partners, donors and volunteers will gather at the construction site at **11 a.m. Tuesday, September 12**, to kick off the Treehouse project and ceremonially "debark" black locust logs that will be used for the treehouse's supports. They also will launch the "Name the Treehouse" contest.

The only such public treehouse in the Tri-State, this universally accessible treehouse has a series of ramps that provides access to all, including children and adults with special needs who are routinely confronted with barriers to fun and play in their daily lives. Built in lush Mt. Airy Forest, the treehouse is a testament to community spirit, being built by all volunteer labor and donations.

Michael Flannery/9 *On Your Kid's Side* and WCPO launched the Universally Accessible Treehouse initiative in Cincinnati, embracing a goal to raise support to build the first such treehouse in the region. Flannery enlisted Forever Young Treehouses designers and visionaries for the project. Rotary Club of Cincinnati enthusiastically took on the Treehouse project in a generous community-wide fundraising campaign. Cincinnati Parks created the perfect setting for the treehouse within the 1,470 acres of Mt. Airy Forest and is managing its construction. Thanks to the commitment of all, the universally accessible treehouse is becoming a reality.

Forever Young Treehouses, an organization based in Burlington, Vermont, has a goal of building universally accessible treehouses in all 50 states, to bring people of all abilities together and closer to nature. Accessibility is only one of the characteristics that set apart the organization's treehouses. Forever Young Treehouses not only comply with the federal Americans for Disabilities Act for accessibility, they also are safe, unique in character and craftsmanship, and use building methods that protect the health of the trees.

The treehouse being built in Mt. Airy Forest will be connected to 12 trees in the forest. It will stand 14 feet tall, supported by black locust logs chosen for their strength and excellent resistance to rot. The logs, weighing up to 1,500 pounds and measuring up to 22 feet in length, came from locust trees cut from a nearby road project. Sugar maple and black maple, chosen because they are strong but fairly light, will be used for the treehouse rafters. The floor of the treehouse will be made from ipê, a strong, rot-resistant wood from the tropics. Cedar shakes will comprise the roof. The treehouse, including its ramps and landings, will be 1,500 square feet. The treehouse will have a series of ramps that will be 6

**-more-**

feet wide. The ramps will begin with poured concrete leading down from a parking area. Long wooden ramps then gradually will rise through the forest up to the treehouse floor. All areas of the treehouse will accommodate wheelchairs.

Cincinnati Parks is overseeing construction, with the involvement of the designers from Forever Young Treehouses. Messer Construction already has created the footers for the black locust supports. Baker Concrete Construction will build the concrete ramps this week. Drees Homes & Zaring Premier Homes will build the wooden ramps. Carpenters from the Homebuilders Association of Greater Cincinnati will work on the treehouse construction. The Home Depot has been involved throughout the process, supplying volunteer labor and materials for all parts of the project. All of the companies and organizations are donating free labor and many of the materials for the project.

**Hometown Huddle:** The Cincinnati Bengals will join the effort on October 10. The Cincinnati Bengals players, and an estimated 300 volunteers will arrive at 10 a.m. that day and spend the day working to build the ramps and other elements of the treehouse. The universally accessible treehouse project is the Cincinnati Bengals NFL/United Way Hometown Huddle project for 2006. The Marvin Lewis Community Fund also is a contributor and Bengals Coach Marvin Lewis will be on site at the treehouse October 10 to celebrate the Hometown Huddle event.

**Name the Treehouse Contest:** The Cincinnati Parks is inviting children of all ages (1-99) to send in names for the treehouse. The winner of the Name the Treehouse contest wins these prizes: 1) recognition – the winning name will be used on Cincinnati Parks signage for the Treehouse; 2) a football autographed by all Cincinnati Bengals who help build the treehouse at Hometown Huddle on October 10; 3) a week at a Cincinnati Park Nature Camp in Summer 2007. All contest entries must be postmarked by September 29, 2006, and mailed to: Name the Treehouse Contest, Cincinnati Parks, 950 Eden Park Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

**Donations:** Donations for the universally accessible treehouse can be sent to the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, 950 Eden Park Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

**Mt. Airy Forest**, with 1,470 acres, is the largest park in the Cincinnati Parks system. Located at 5083 Colerain Ave., 10 minutes from downtown Cincinnati, Mt. Airy has 1,169 acres of forest, 170 acres of open meadow and 120-acre arboretum. The park also offers 14 miles of hiking trails, 16 miles of bridle trails, 23 picnic areas, and playgrounds including a handicapped-accessible playground.

#### Treehouse In-Kind Donors

American Scaffolding Inc.  
Baker Concrete Construction  
Cincinnati Bengals NFL/United Way  
Hometown Huddle  
Cort Furniture

Drees Homes & Zaring Premier Homes  
Home Depot  
Homebuilders Association of Greater  
Cincinnati  
Marvin Lewis Community Fund

Messer Construction Co. (with Hilltop Basic  
Resources, Gerdau Ameristeel, CHC  
Fabricating Corporation and Bobcat)  
Mueller Roofing Co.  
Scott Crawford

#### Treehouse Financial Donors

9 On your Kid's Side Fund  
Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation  
The Dornette Foundation  
Family & Friends of Bonnie "Gogi" Collins  
Family & Friends of Eunice Kemper  
Federated Department Stores  
Huntington Bank

The Jack J. Smith Jr. Charitable Trust  
Kroger Company  
Maxwell C. Weaver Foundation  
Ohio Attorney General's Office  
Settlement Fund  
The Procter & Gamble Fund  
Ronald McDonald House Charities

Rotary Foundation of Cincinnati  
Scripps Howard Foundation  
The Spaulding Foundation  
Stillson Foundation (Fifth Third Bank,  
Agent)  
The Thomas J. Emery Memorial  
US Bank

#### Treehouse Civic Volunteers

Best Buy  
Cincinnati Bengals  
Duke Energy  
Fifth Third Bank  
General Electric

Give Back Cincinnati  
Home Depot  
Landscape Associates  
Marvinettes

PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Rotary Club of Cincinnati  
United Way  
Vineyard Community Church